

A Cub Reporter's Note Book

Continued from Page Twenty-three.

as this writer is aware, now is the first time this true story of a great impersonation has been publicly disclosed. Blaine, Cleveland, the silver haired physician, all have passed on to their accounting. After thirty-eight years, the revelation can cause no heartburns.

In July of the same Presidential year—1884—I had given to THE NEW YORK HERALD, from Philadelphia, a long political interview with Charles Emory Smith, who afterward, as editor of the Philadelphia Press, was for nearly nine years my journalistic chief. Mr. Smith had just returned from the post-convention "editorial council" in Augusta, Me., where he, together with Whitelaw Reid and William Walter Phelps, had been closeted with Mr. Blaine, wielding the blue pencil over the nominee's letter of acceptance.

A veteran reporter preserves little or none of his prolific output. It is ephemeral. Its worth, at best, is for a day. "In the morning it groweth and flourisheth; in the evening it is cut down and withereth." But the novice—for the first year or so of a bustling newspaper life—pastes up his most prideful product in a scrapbook and dotes upon it. To that youthful vanity the writer—no longer a cub—owes the fact that the Charles Emory Smith interview lies under his eye as he now writes. Here is an excerpt:

"What is Mr. Blaine's real feeling concerning Cleveland's nomination?" asked your correspondent.

"He feels just as his friends do, that Cleveland is an easy man to beat. There were several candidates before the convention whose nomination would have caused him a great deal more uneasiness. When I received the news of Cleveland's nomination I was on the train only six miles from Augusta. I went to Mr. Blaine's house immediately after my arrival and the flood of telegrams already was welling up from all parts of the country. Why, Mr. Blaine received almost as many congratulations upon Cleveland's nomination as he did after his own."

There followed a detailed canvass of the doubtful States—New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, where the Benjamin F. Butler side show threatened disaffection. Mr. Smith claimed them all for Blaine. But in passing, I note, he made this seer-like observation:

"The real battleground is going to be New York. It is in New York city and Brooklyn that the independent strength is greatest and the Republican disaffection most formidable."

Summing up his conclusion with all the complacent assurance of one year's experience in journalism, the reporter then presumed to tell the readers of THE NEW YORK HERALD:

"The editor of the Press, in his sweeping attempt to catalogue all the doubtful States upon the Blaine side of the ledger, is probably over-sanguine. But, coming as he does, directly from the inner sanctuary of the party councils, his rosy views no doubt harmonize substantially with those of the head of the ticket."

"Here is the other side of the story. Gov. Leon Abbett, of New Jersey, who passed through here on his way from the convention, looks upon the prospect through Democratic lenses. 'Cleveland will carry New York, New Jersey and Connecticut,' said he. 'I am sure of New York. I can't give you details now, but I am absolutely certain Tammany will turn in for the ticket. John Kelly is no fool and I know what I'm talking about.'"

The writer's earliest effort at a "dramatic interview" was with Fanny Davenport. She was playing *Fedora* in Philadelphia, in 1884, and it chanced that the Divine Sarah, only one week before, had featured there the same tragedy. I had seen both performances. When I asked Miss Davenport, "What do you think of Bernhardt's conception of *Fedora*?" she replied:

"Oh, I think Bernhardt almost perfect in all her work. The play was written for her and she is fully equal to it. Sardou did not consent to let me take it until Bernhardt kindly had become my sponsor. While at Nice, I went over the part carefully with the author, accepting his suggestions upon the minutest points."

When the chat had turned upon Miss Davenport's much admired gowns she said: "My *Fedora* costumes came from St. Petersburg, but I ordered them from there chiefly to have them in perfect harmony with the play and its stage setting. I do not

believe in elaborate dressing except as it serves to sustain the reality of the character. Take a character like *Lady Teazle*, for instance. Now, I don't believe such a character can be overdressed."

"I remember years ago, when I was playing *Lady Teazle* at Mrs. John Drew's theater, I used sometimes to keep them waiting between the acts and Mrs. Drew more than once said to me reproachfully: 'Oh, Fanny, Fanny, this is all nonsense. Five changes of costume for one character! Why, one dress was all I ever thought of needing.'"

"Well, Mrs. Drew," I replied, "I don't believe *Lady Teazle* would have worn the same dress five days in succession and I must personate the true character with all its foibles."

"And, by the way," added Miss Davenport, "I noticed that when Mrs. Drew went to San Francisco afterward, she took no fewer than six dresses herself."

One wonders if interviewing, as practiced upon political and stage celebrities, is not doomed to the limbo of the lost arts. Had these ancient interviews—a beginner's "prentice efforts"—occurred in the present decade, "Pigiron" Kelley doubtless would have handed out at Quarantine (as the Right Hon. Reginald McKenna, former Chancellor of the British Exchequer, did recently when I confronted him aboard the Aquitania at a wretchedly early morning hour) a neatly typed statement—"canned stuff"—and all news gatherers would have fared alike.

Senator Blaine's remarks would have been "released" only after painful censoring by his campaign publicity bureau. Charles Emory Smith would have returned to Philadelphia with his impressions already typed and would have passed out proof slips from the Press composing room, whence a messenger boy could just as well deliver the goods as a star reporter.

And Miss Davenport's views upon *Fedora*, Bernhardt and Russian gowns would have been formulated probably by her press agent before her opening night and mailed to the dramatic editor "for immediate release."

Cobb in His Home Town

PADUCAHANS IN HISTORY. By Fred G. Neuman. The Young Publishing Company, Paducah, Kentucky.

NATURALLY old Jiv. Cobb is a conspicuous figure in Mr. Neuman's little volume. The frontispiece of the book shows him standing beside Chief Paduke's statue, and one chapter is devoted to the Hon. William S. Bishop, the Judge Priest of the stories, while another deals with Cobb and his teachers and old school days. One story told indicates Cobb's extraordinarily retentive memory. "On one occasion Irvin was seen and heard expostulating his esoteric cogitations to a number of students intent on hearing what he had to say even though the lesson was in progress. He was promptly called to book and given seventy verses of Shakespeare to memorize. It was hardly two hours after the other pupils were dismissed when Irvin had learned the lines by rote. The professor realized the need of severer punishment in Irvin's case and admonished him that in future he would be given Latin to memorize. Professor Cade's amazement was even greater when young Cobb quoted the Latin verses. It was real punishment to Irvin when the professor made him translate it as he gave it from memory."

What the newspaper business offers as a profession, how success is secured, newspaper influence, the village newspaper, the newspaper of the small city, technical journalism, the foreign correspondent, newspaper history and the journalism of fifty years ago compared with that of to-day are some of the subjects treated in Chester S. Lord's book, "The Young Man and Journalism," just published by the Macmillan Company. Mr. Lord was for thirty-three years managing editor of THE SUN.

Prof. Ernest L. Bogart of the University of Illinois, author of "War Costs and Their Financing" (Appleton), recently sailed for Persia to serve a year as adviser on banking and currency to the Persian Government.

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